



EXTRA

Criminal & Juvenile Justice Information Advisory Group Meeting August 14, 2020

Volume 5 Issue 2

In this issue

- Pandemic perspectives, impacts, silver linings
- Advisory Group updates

Have a question or suggestion?

Contact Matthew Pizza (651-793-2595 or matthew.pizza@state.mn.us) for more information

Pandemic Roundtable

Advisory Group members spent a good portion of its August 14, 2020, meeting focused on the impacts and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Members shared their perspectives in a roundtable discussion, looking at the difficulties posed by these unprecedented times as well as the surprising opportunities of using virtual environments.

On the positive side, several committee members noticed increased efficiency, particularly with court hearings. Members reported that it's easier to get the right people to attend virtual sessions, as there is no need to travel or physically locate people in a courthouse. It's also been easier because of the reduced need to travel across the state for a short meeting or hearing. Although, from the public defender perspective, private communication between clients and their attorneys in communicating during a virtual hearing has been awkward, and arranging reliable internet connections has been challenging.

Another positive mentioned by several members is increased accessibility for the public. Meetings once constrained to a physical location are now available virtually, allowing the public to view without needing transportation.

There have been challenges. Several members talked about technical problems that occurred when staff shifted to working from home, including setting up equipment, dealing with limited internet bandwidth, and learning how to interface and do business with platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Webex.

Another difficulty has been balancing public accessibility and open meeting laws with security,

particularly with ensuring that internet pranksters are not able to hijack virtual meetings (e.g., “Zoombombing”). This problem has been curtailed somewhat with platforms such as Zoom and Webex offering better options for managing registration and security, and increased familiarity with these features.

Several members also described the added responsibilities associated with following CDC guidelines, such as installing barriers, procuring PPE, wearing masks, and ensuring social distancing among staff and the public. From a law enforcement side, members talked about the “education over enforcement” theme in enforcing mask mandates and social distancing as ordered by the governor, and the increase in suspense records.

Advisory Group Announcements

- The Advisory Group welcomed new members James Densley, Artika Roller, and Diane Bartell.
- The 1st Vice Chair position is still vacant. The time commitment is minimal, with up to four meetings per year (virtual/teleconference). This position is required by the Advisory Group's bylaws. Reach out to the Advisory Group email if you are interested.

Next Advisory Group Meeting
Friday, November 13, 2020
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
Location TBD

Note: The information in this publication is an unofficial summary of activity. It should not be considered official meeting minutes or an official program status report. Information subject to change.

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